

2009 Congregational Sabbatical Plan



***5-14-2009
Community Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Lincolnshire, Illinois***

Sabbatical: (noun) of or pertaining to “the Sabbath,” a day of rest.

In a tradition that stretches back to the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament), a Sabbath is a day or period of rest. This “resting” was understood to reflect the resting of God in the work of creation (Genesis 1). Later, in Mosaic Law, there was granted a “Sabbatical year” (one every seven years). Through the years, a “Sabbatical” has accumulated other meanings, most commonly associated with professional Sabbaticals (first recorded in 1886) in which professors were given a period of leave to undertake research and writing.

Churches all over the country have also recognized the value and theological importance for Sabbaticals. Not only is this a time for a pastor to leave the regular rhythms of ministerial life in order to focus on activities for renewal, *but also the congregations find themselves able to grow and develop new energy and insight during this period.* Thus, while Kory will be away, cultivating spiritual re-creation for renewal of his leadership, our congregation will also be “re-creating.” We will be trying new things, hearing new voices, and considering our mission statement.

As a result, this Sabbatical will be a productive time, establishing fertile soil within our congregation to meet the harvests of the coming years. The hope is that when Kory returns, rested and renewed at the end of his Sabbatical, he will *not* find a dormant congregation, but a *vibrant, energized* people of faith. In this way, the Sabbatical affords an important opportunity for both minister and congregation to enliven, refresh, and come to a new self-understanding.

To that end, the Sabbatical Planning Team, along with Kory and I, have collaborated to think through the summer Sabbatical for the congregation. The following plan will sketch the contours and direction of our congregational activity for the next several months. I hope it will provide a clear sense of what we will be doing. Our Sabbatical will mirror Kory's plan thematically as we take up the church mission statement:

- *Welcome* people into a loving and caring church family.
- *Equip* people with a Christ-centered faith that works in real life.
- *Share* Christ's love for us through compassionate service to others.

Each month we will focus on one aspect of the mission statement by exploring it through sermons, newsletter articles, collecting congregational information, and hearing new voices. This will require input and participation from you. We will utilize the website, weekly word, e-mails, and bulletins as mediums to communicate and interact. There will be opportunities to provide input on topics like welcoming, equipping, and sharing. In addition, we will try to increase lay participation in the order of worship, newsletter articles, and liturgical planning. Be on the lookout for information as to how you can contribute. In addition, we will have ways you can participate *even as you leave for vacation!* Finally, we will be encouraged to follow along with Kory's blog to see the continued progress of his Sabbatical study and reflections.

In the end, our various ways of exploring the mission statement will hopefully unfold a new sense of our church's ministry. When Kory returns to us, may he find that we have been refreshed, renewed, and reawakened for the good work of God here on earth. May he find us more self-aware, more God-attuned, and especially eager to take on the mission we have set for ourselves as God's people.

Michael

Following in the Disciples of Christ's foundational belief in the "priesthood of all believers," effective church leadership results when a team acts in concert to accomplish God's work. A church committed to a pastoral sabbatical concept foresees benefits for both the pastor and the congregation. The goal of Kory's sabbatical, for him, is to permit him time for renewal of spirit and re-connection –with God, fellow pastors, and his inner being. For the church the goal is to discover more about who we are as a congregation and as individuals. This initiative will empower the laity of our church as we step forward to emulate what the early church did in the book of Acts, finding strengths and developing competencies we never suspected we possess.

Thus, for the mutual benefits to accrue, we need for the church leadership and the congregation all to support and participate in this opportunity for rejuvenation, renewal, and growth as we affirm the tenets of our mission statement-- welcoming, equipping, and sharing. Our coming together again as a church family upon Kory's return should find us stronger, amazed at our learning and growth, and ready to go where God is leading us with preparation, energy, passion, and excitement.

The Sabbatical Planning Team

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JUNE

Focus—*Welcoming people into a loving and caring church family*

Theme: *Welcoming*

Objectives: Discovering how we feel welcomed

Using a website, we will collect experiences from the congregation, starting June 1 and continuing through June 14, on “welcoming.” The website address is:

cccmission.wordpress.com

Using a questionnaire, we will collect experiences of welcoming as members of our congregation visit other congregations.

Preaching:

June 7th Michael Preaching on “Welcoming”

June 14th Michael Preaching on “Welcoming” with data collected from congregation

June 21st Jeff Zimmerman, Ordained Disciples/UCC member Preaching

June 28th Nelson preaching for Youth Mission Trip send-off

Newsletter:

Article exploring “welcoming” from theological, biblical, and congregational lenses.

Newsletter will communicate our theme for the month of June, asking people to use the website/blogsite to communicate their experiences of “welcoming”

Weekly Word:

Encourage people 6/5 and 6/12 to participate in website on “welcoming”

Email:

One general information E-mail sent the first week of June with a link to the website/blogsite explaining the purpose/use of the site for collecting and conversing about “welcoming”

Bulletin Insert:

5/31 and 6/7 Insert containing June's theme, focus, and link/info for the website

Kory's Blog: encourage the congregation to stay connected to Kory through the blog.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Your Name: _____

Name of the Congregation: _____

Location: City: _____ State: _____

Brief Description of Worship service (time, place, style; ex: Sunday morning traditional service):

Did you feel welcomed? *YES* _____ *NO* _____

What made you feel welcome or unwelcome?

What did you **LIKE** about the worship experience in this congregation?

What did you **NOT LIKE** about the worship experience in this congregation?

Additional Comments:

Purpose: During the summer many people in our congregation travel and experience worship in other settings. What better way to explore “welcoming” than to see how other congregations are practicing welcome. Thus, this questionnaire is designed to capture a portion of your experience in worship settings specifically focused on how the worship and the people of a particular church practiced welcoming.

The Questionnaire: Please fill out the questions to the best of your ability after attending and then reflecting on the worship service. Give some thought to your experience and your feelings as you met people, worshiped, and observed the life of this church.

Then what? Drop off your completed questionnaires at our church office or turn it in at CCC's morning worship service. We will collect this information and pool it with the other thoughts and reflections about our own congregation on how we are and do welcoming. Through these efforts we hope not only to learn about ourselves and others, but we also hope to be transformed so that we can practice better the art of welcoming.

JULY

Focus—*Equipping people with a Christ-centered faith that works in real life*

Theme: *Equipping*

Objectives: Discovering how we want to be equipped

We will use the website to collect people's desires for “being equipped”

Question: “How would you like to be equipped?”

Using a page on the website, we will ask the congregation, starting July 1 and continuing through July 19, how they would like to be equipped (as members of CCC)

Preaching:

July 5th Youth Mission Trip Sunday

July 12th Michael Preaching on “Equipping”

July 19th Nelson Preaching

July 26th Michael Preaching on “Equipping” with data from congregation

Newsletter:

Article exploring “equipping” from theological, biblical, and congregational lenses.

Newsletter will communicate our theme and focus for the month of July, provide information on website/blogsite

Weekly Word:

Encourage people 7/3, 7/10 and 7/17 to participate in website on “equipping”

Email:

One general information E-mail sent the first week of July with a link to the website explaining the purpose of the site for conversing about “equipping”

Bulletin Insert:

6/26 and 7/3 Insert containing July's theme, focus, and link/info for the website

Kory's Blog: continue to promote Kory's website as a means of staying connected

August

Focus—*Sharing God's love with us through compassionate service to others*

Theme: *Sharing/Service*

Objectives: Discovering how we share through service

We will use the website to discover how people are serving and sharing in their lives

Question: “How do you serve?”

Using a blogsite or page on the website, we will ask people, starting August 1 and continuing through August 16, how they would like to be equipped (as members of Community Christian Church)

Preaching:

August 2nd Nelson Preaching

**Missions Minute on Sharing/Service

August 9th Michael Preaching on “Sharing/Service”

**Missions Minute on Sharing/Service

August 16th Michael Preaching

**Missions Minute on Sharing/Service

August 23rd Christal Williams, Associate Regional Minister, preaching

**Missions Minute on Sharing/Service

August 30th Michael Preaching on “Sharing/Service” with data from congregation

**Missions Minute on Sharing/Service

**Missions Minutes each Sunday will feature one member from the congregation giving a brief statement about the organization/cause they participate in and how they understand that “service” in view of their Christian identity

**These Missions Minutes will be organized by Beth McCormack

Newsletter:

Article exploring “sharing/service” from theological, biblical, and congregational lenses.

Newsletter will communicate our theme and focus for the month of August, provide information on website/blogsite

Weekly Word:

Encourage people 7/31, 8/7, 8/14, and 8/21 to participate in website on “service”

Email:

One general information E-mail sent the first week of August with a link to the website/blogsite explaining the purpose/use of the site for discovering how we “serve” in different ways

Bulletin Insert:

7/26 and 8/2 Insert containing August's theme, focus, and link/info for the website

Kory's Blog: continue to promote Kory's website as a means of staying connected

Special Services:

We will attempt to “share” in a “service” with another congregation twice in August

Dates to be determined

Proposed churches: Arlington Heights Christian Church (Pastor Steve Welker), Christian Church of Villa Park (Rev. Kerry Waller), United Christian Church (Rev. Howard Kennon)

Final Product

- Blog and website information collected from the three months
- Vacation Questionnaire on Welcoming
- Newsletter articles on Mission statement
- Sermons preached on Mission statement
- Information from August's Missions Minutes
- Bulletin/Order of Worship and Sermon text (if available) from joint worship services in August